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Wilbert.
updater
News, stories, and ideas for funeral professionals



Front Row View

By Mark Klingenberger

Funeral Professionals and those who help them have an incredible capacity to care for people under the most difficult of circumstances. With that compassion often must come the ability to distance themselves from the difficulty surrounding the event. It is something you have to do to keep the burden from consuming us.

Recently, I attended the visitation and funeral for a friend's sister and was struck by the experience and what people found important, as I was no longer a distance from the death, but a participant in the service. We were all talking at visitation and I could not believe the level of laughter in the room full of people. All around were friends and family telling stories about great experiences and fun they had with her. It truly gave you a sense of what a great person she was and the impact she had on people's lives.

While we talked during visitation, my friend removed a bookmark from his coat pocket. It had all of the images that would be on the vault cover at the cemetery the next day. He shared the story behind each of the images and how they were special to his sister and his family. It was a cherished collection of family photos and symbols that brought happiness and joy to them when they needed it the most in a time of great sadness.

The next day was Mass and the procession to the cemetery. As everyone gathered for the final prayers at the grave and were invited to stay for the lowering of the vault, the words of

Pat Lynch, a profoundly respected Funeral Professional kept coming through. "A good funeral gets the dead where they need to go and the living where they need to be."

A good funeral gets the dead where they need to go and the living where they need to be.
— Pat Lynch

Take a moment today and think about the families you and many others will help through their time of sorrow today. Take an extra moment and think about how you would want things done for your own family. This photo came from Sterling Wilbert Vault in Sterling, IL, and it sums up a good way they strive to look at service every day. It is an effort to remind us all of what it is like to be in the family's shoes in the front row at the funeral. ☺



Mark Klingenberger is Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Wilbert Funeral Services, Inc.

Coming Home. Finally!

By Jerry J. Brown



“Leave no man or woman behind.”

For decades, this inspiring phrase has prevailed as the absolute gospel of a dedicated group of military humanitarians with the acronym, “JPAC”...Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command.

With inexorable fervor, JPAC continues to search for and recover the bodies (remains) of nearly 85,000 men and women who never returned from combat during World War II, Korea, Viet Nam and most recently, the Middle East.

Few, if any, question the moral commitment and validity of searching for the American Warriors who so valiantly sacrificed their lives for our freedom and safety. Yet, there are myriad families, friends and colleagues who still wait and wonder “WHY?” their friends and loved ones’ never came home.

To this day, searching, finding, identifying and bringing home the countless military people who have vanished in combat still exist in historic proportions. Carbon sampling, extreme paleontological studies and recent DNA findings are proof of the human imperatives of discovering, retrieving, returning and honoring their dead since the dawn of humankind.

- Archeological discoveries indicate that prehistoric man i.e. Neanderthal, Piltdown and Peking instinctively buried their dead with crude ceremonies.
- In 447 BC, during the war between Greece and Sparta, the Greek army called a two day moratorium in their battle with the Spartans giving both sides time to retrieve their dead and memorialize their sacrifice.

- In the deadly battle of Manassas (Bull Run) in the first year of the American Civil War, both Union and Confederate troops signaled a halt in the battle to gather and honor their victims of the conflict.
- And in World War II, during the bloody battle of Bastogne, both German and American soldiers called a momentary truce to gather bodies of the dead for humanitarian care and burial.

Despite being burdened by the inevitable bureaucratic slothfulness, JPAC’s relentless search for fallen service members continues to respond to a form of grief known as “Ambiguous Loss,” which may strike families from generation to generation as they wait, wonder and suffer the mystery of a lost loved one on some distant battle field.

The syndrome of “Ambiguous Loss” exists even beyond war casualties where missing civilians require costly “search/rescue and discovery” measures such as, Amelia Earhart, John Kennedy Jr., young Rockefeller and countless others.

LIFE IS INDEED PRECIOUS,
EVEN AFTER DEATH. 🌀



Jerry J. Brown is a former President of Brown-Wilbert in Roseville, MN.



In a Small Community Wilbert Makes a Big Difference

Korean War Veteran Missing 63 Years Laid to Rest in Wilbert Vault

By Carl Barker

The service for Sgt. Charles L. Scott was attended by veterans, officials neighbors and friends, as well as his 98-year-old mother and his sister.

On Wednesday, September 5, 2013, we had the pleasure to serve a very special family. Sgt. Charles L. Scott was killed in the Korean War on December 2, 1950. He was missing for almost 63 years. His remains were recently discovered in an unidentified, numbered grave in Hawaii. DNA testing identified the remains as Sgt. Scott and he was returned to his hometown of Lynchburg, VA for a formal burial.

With a little finesse, we were allowed to use our full Wilbert set-up at Fort Hill Cemetery, which is a full perpetual-care cemetery. Two of our most experienced CSR's, James Barnett and Terry Overfelt, set two tents, chairs with veteran chair covers, funeral grass, water coolers, a register stand and the ovation device, displaying the open Veteran Triune® vault with a custom legacy (thank you Marty Cox) on the carapace.

Two local television stations were present, reporting with live coverage. It was a very large occasion with much fanfare. Sgt. Scott certainly earned his honor. A motorcycle motorcade of more than 100 Veterans of Foreign Wars escorted the hearse from our state capital in Richmond to the cemetery in

The custom legacy print that adorned the carapace of Sgt. Scott's SST Veteran Triune is displayed below.

continued on page 5



Sgt. Charles L. Scott
July 31, 1930 - December 2, 1950



The funeral ceremony for Sgt. Charles L. Scott was attended by more than 100 members of the VFW. The funeral procession began in Richmond, VA and ended at the cemetery in Lynchburg, VA.

continued from page 4

Lynchburg. Sgt. Scott's 98-year-old mother and his sister were present for the service, along with countless veterans, officials, neighbors and friends.

This letter is to thank you for partnering with Richards-Wilbert, Inc. on this most important occasion to provide a Veteran Triune vault for Sgt. Scott. Please know that the impact of our generosity is not lost on the family or with the funeral home. It was very much appreciated. Mrs. Scott was overwhelmed by the generosity of so many, for the return of her son. 🙏



Carl Barker is General Manager for Richards-Wilbert, Inc. in Roanoke Valley, VA.

Funeral Service Education: What is taught at Pierce Colleges?

By Patty S. Hutcheson, CFSP

Over the past few years, I have been asked, “What do y’all teach at that college?” And, I have heard statements such as, “these students don’t want to work and can’t embalm.” As for what we teach at Gupton-Jones College, there is a very involved process of curriculum development for funeral service education. The American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE), which is the accrediting body for all mortuary colleges, is responsible for developing the curriculum taught in mortuary colleges. The ABFSE is comprised of representatives from the 58 accredited mortuary colleges, the National Funeral Directors Association, The National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association, the International Cemetery, Cremation, and Funeral Association, and appointed public members. The ABFSE has a Curriculum Committee comprised of 12 members representing NFDA, NFD&MA, ICCFA, and the educators. Every year the Curriculum Committee meets and reviews several of the 21 subject outlines. These 21 outlines, approximately 1,700 pages in total, are on a five-year rotation for review.

In looking at the current curriculum for funeral service education, approximately 25 percent of the required curriculum is devoted to the Sciences, including Embalming, Restorative Art, Chemistry, Microbiology, Pathology, and Anatomy. There is also a minimum of 10 embalming clinicals that must be completed by each student. Another 25 percent of the curriculum is assigned to Business Management courses which include Accounting, Computers, Small Business Management, and Funeral Home Management and Directing. The next area is the Social Sciences, which includes Grief Psychology and Counseling, Sociology, History of Funeral Service and Communication Skills comprising

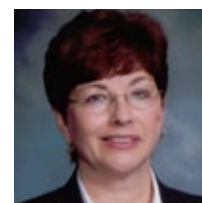
approximately 15 percent of the curriculum. The last area of the required funeral service curriculum covers Legal, Ethical, and Regulatory Compliance. This area comprises approximately 10 percent of the curriculum and includes Business Law, Funeral Service Law, and Ethics. Since the minimum requirement for program completion is an Associate’s Degree, there is a requirement that at least 25 percent of the total credits must be in general education, non-technical courses as well. Each instructor has the autonomy to include more information than found in the curriculum based on geographic location, cultural norms, or trends within the profession.

We inform students that funeral service is 24/7... death doesn’t take a holiday.

In April 2010, the ABFSE Curriculum Committee decided that since all the outlines had been reviewed in the last five years that they would review the curriculum in its entirety as to how it meets the needs of today’s funeral professional. Representatives from the member organizations, the colleges and the current student body met in Cypress, CA. Based on the feedback this committee received from the students and the Expectation Survey authored by NFDA, mortuary colleges seem to be accomplishing their task of educating students for entry-level positions within the profession. The group did discuss updating the curriculum to include more of the alternatives to a traditional service and disposition. Cremation is already covered in the curriculum under Law and Funeral Directing, but other alternatives and merchandising options

could be added. The goal of mortuary science education is to equip students with the basic knowledge and skills to enter the profession. The educators then rely on the practitioners to mentor and further develop the intern’s skills.

As to the statement that students don’t want to work, this may be a generational concern that is beyond the role of the college. I promise, that at Gupton-Jones College we inform students that funeral service is 24/7 and that death does not take a holiday. We stress the need to complete more than the minimally required embalming cases for more experience. Faculty at Pierce Colleges talks about the need for good communication skills and for providing families with every option available. We discuss proper dress, punctuality, and going above what is expected. As licensed funeral professionals ourselves, the instructors at Pierce Colleges know that we have a responsibility to the student and to the profession. The future of funeral service depends on having qualified, compassionate funeral service personnel willing to go beyond the minimum expectations. Each of the Pierce Colleges: Gupton-Jones College, Mid-America College, and Dallas Institute, are collectively striving to accomplish this goal and we are always willing to make adjustments when and where necessary to improve the quality of education available to students of the funeral service profession. 🌐



Patty S. Hutcheson is President for Gupton-Jones College of Funeral Service.

The Value of Viewing at Infant Funerals

By Lance Ray

Each year in the United States, millions of women conceive children. For the majority of the new, expectant mothers, the pregnancy will be planned and fulfilled through the birth of a healthy infant. But for the unfortunate women, conception will not terminate in the happiness of a healthy infant, but rather in the sadness over the death of the infant.

As funeral directors one of our greatest challenges as professionals is to help ease this time of great pain and loss for the grieving parents.

All of us at one time or another has lost a friend or family member that we were very close to. The loss may have happened suddenly or we may have expected their death. Whatever the circumstances, the death of an infant is usually unanticipated and therefore very upsetting for the mother and father.

Often times when an infant dies, the mother is left recuperating in the hospital for several days and unable to contribute to making the funeral arrangements or attend the funeral due to her stay in the hospital.

With adult funerals, it is common to have the body lie in state for two or three days. Yet with a stillborn or newborn infant, we seem to treat the call as if the parents have requested an immediate burial with no viewing. Although some parents do request an immediate burial, many more parents wish to have a full ceremony with viewing.

I realize that many embalmers have the belief that embalming a stillborn or newborn infant is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Not to mention that some funeral homes look upon an infant death call as nothing more than a public service to their community with a loss of revenue. Therefore, embalmers do as little as

possible in preparation of the infant or stillborn. Unfortunately in these cases, it is the grieving parents who lose the most.

The most elementary method of preparation is to wrap the infant in cotton and saturate the cotton wrap with cavity fluid. This method will result in extreme drying and wrinkling of the skin. As professionals, this method cannot be viewed as an acceptable means of preservation.

To prepare and preserve an infant so that viewing is not only possible, but a positive experience for the family, I have found that injecting the stillborn from the right common carotid artery not only to be the easiest method, but it also produces unsurpassed preservation results if the vascular system has been developed.

As a reference the infant carotid artery is similar in size to an adult's radial artery. To ease in the locating of the vessels, it helps to place the infant's back across a small head block. This expands the area between the head and the chest and permits an open area to locate vessels. A 1/16" cannula works best for the injection. Drainage can be eased with the aid of a standard groove director in place of a drain tube.

Once the vessels have been located the baby should be removed from the head block and placed directly on the preparation table. I have found a small sponge works well in slightly elevating the head and keeping the body in a stationary position while embalming.

Fluid mixture should be the embalmers next concern, and care should be taken in this area. I have had good results with a mild mixture of Care 18 mixed 9 ounces per gallon. Pierce's emulsion oil based fluids allow for a stronger solution

without the fear of dehydrating the infant's delicate skin. One gallon of fluid should be more than adequate amount of fluid to preserve the infant's body.

One of our greatest challenges...is to help ease this time of great pain...for the grieving parents.

Once the injection of the fluid is complete, the vessels should be tightly tied off. The next step is to dry the incision site with cotton and fill the incision with a powdered incision sealer.

The incision site should be sutured tight and form a neat closure. With the possibility of parents wanting to hold the baby one last time, it is very important to ensure leak-free incision site. The use of external glue should be used as an added line of protection against leakage.

In closing, I urge every embalmer to reconsider the value that viewing has not only for adult funerals, but also infants. Without viewing, there is not a need for embalming, and thus no need for professional embalmers.

For more information on this subject or to have a Pierce Representative contact you, email me at lray@wilbert.com or call me at 800-527-6419. 📧📞



Lance Ray is Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Pierce Chemical.



Weathering the Funeral Industry's "Perfect Storm"

By Don Robinson

The perfect storm is an expression often used to describe the circumstances when a rare combination of events come together and aggravate each other to the point of yielding a greater level of devastation. This situation was captured in the motion picture titled "The Perfect Storm" starring George Clooney and Mark Wahlberg. You may recall the fishing boat, Andrea Gail, was caught in the middle of a confluence of weather conditions, any one of which the crew may have outmaneuvered, but the combination proved overwhelming.

Today the perfect storm for the Funeral Professional could be the cumulative impact of the rising cost of caskets and other funeral merchandise, the steady climb in cremation, and a struggling national economy. Any one of the aforementioned challenges could negatively impact the financial results of your funeral business but the combination, over several years, can be devastating. This is the first of a series to discuss ways the Funeral Professional can best weather the storm.

Annual price increases averaging 4% to 7% seem to be the norm for many casket manufacturers. In fact, when was the last year your price increase was under 3%? I cannot remember either. To make matters worse some manufacturers have elected to move the annual increase from January back to October. The reality is some increases are necessary to offset the rise in raw materials,

healthcare costs, petroleum products, etc. while others are designed to achieve targeted returns in a declining burial market. With no end in sight Funeral Professionals must be proactive in mitigating the impact to their bottom-line.

Look for value over brand

The difficult truth for some is today's customer is more interested in the value received from your funeral business than the brand of casket. To deliver value, the Funeral Professional must first seek value from their suppliers. To me value is the combination of quality products with strong eye-appeal, competitive pricing, and outstanding service. You do not have to sacrifice one to get the other. One note about competitive pricing, it is imperative you wade through the discounts offered against inflated published price lists and the potential of a deferred rebate compared to the price offered off-invoice at the time of the purchase. Take the result that yields the best value today helping your cash flow and bank the savings yourself.



Consider multiple suppliers

Whenever negotiating a new purchasing agreement I strive to have multiple "horses in the race." In my experience it tends to keep everyone on their toes and yields the best results. At the end of your evaluation you may still pick one supplier or you may elect a 60/40 split or you might offer a corresponding "value alternative" for

your top four selling caskets. The good news is there are a number of qualified manufacturers and independent casket distributors anxious to earn your business. To that point, avoid multi-year agreements unless you receive multi-year benefits (such as price protection) and ensure the supplier earns your business every day. Done professionally and with respect to all parties, you cannot go wrong with this approach.

Adjust the sales multiple, or better yet the sale price, to fit the specific situation

I have always struggled with the concept that confines the casket price charged the customer to an even multiple (such as 2X) of the amount paid by your funeral business. Seek the casket with the best value as outlined above and set a reasonable price based on your market conditions regardless of the multiple. If you have negotiated well, the multiple will likely be higher than 2X generating greater margins and yet the sale price will be lower to the customer making you more competitive in your market. In fact the more aggressive suppliers have developed a "casket calculator" spreadsheet to help you achieve the optimum balance between cost, margin, and sale price. All you need to do is to bring your current cost by model and an open mind.

Taking care of the customer at a time of great need will always be paramount to every funeral business. However, this is best coupled with a sound business approach to negotiating the cost of merchandise to help ensure your business is still serving the community for years to come.  



Don Robinson is the Senior VP of Supply Chain Management at Suhor Industries, Inc. as well as the President of Signet Supply.

The Wilbert Updater Puzzle Contest

Fax This Page!
Print! Solve! Fax!

Solve the puzzle for a chance at a \$25 American Express® Gift Card.

Print out your puzzle, complete and fax to: 708-865-1646. The first person to correctly solve the puzzle and fax the solution will win. The 100th correct fax will receive a \$25 AMEX Gift Card, too! And, to make it even more interesting, we will draw a fax from all those sent to receive a third \$25 AMEX Gift Card. The winners will be announced in our next edition of the *Updater*. Good luck!

Name: _____

Company: _____

Phone Number: _____


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Updater Summer 2013 Puzzle Contest Winners

Congratulations to the winners of the Summer *Updater* Puzzle Contest:

Landis Price of Barr-Price Funeral Home, Lexington, S.C. was the first to fax in a completed, correct puzzle.

Jim Fullerton of Fullerton Funeral Home, Mason City, Iowa was the 100th correct responder and

Suzanne Rodman of Meadowbrook Memorial Gardens in Suffolk, VA was our randomly-chosen winner. Each will receive a \$25 American Express® Gift card. 

BEREAVED	COLUMBARIUM	COMMEMORATING
CREMAINS	CRYPT	EMBALM
FIRST RESPONDERS	LEGACY	MAUSOLEUM
MORTUARY	OBITUARY	PALLBEARERS
PROCESSION	RESPECT	RESTORATION
RINGUARDIAN	SCATTERING TUBE	VENETIAN
VIEWING	VISITATION	

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